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III. — *Prorsus*

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IN *Studies in Philology*, XVII, 402 ff. I published some Marginalia, which, as the name implied, were in their origin marginal notes on subjects which had attracted my attention. Some of these represented the accumulations of more than twenty years and might be said to be ripe for printing. The one on *prorsus* was prematurely published, in part because our lexicons, grammars, and commentators give no idea of the extent to which the word is used, besides containing some misleading statements. Thus Lejay, on Hor. *Serm.* I, 5, 70, refers the use of *prorsus* as a means of expressing the superlative degree only to Sallust, Curtius, and Cicero in his Letters,<sup>1</sup> and says that *prorsus* was avoided by poets.<sup>2</sup> Since the volume of the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* which is to contain words beginning with *P* is not likely to appear for some time, the following notes may have a temporary value.

The adjective *prorsus*, except in a few technical terms, means 'prose,' either as an adjective or as a feminine substantive (*sc. oratio*). The form *prorsa* seems to be rare; it is found in Apul. *Flor.* 18 (p. 90, l. 2, Hild.), iam et prorsa et vorsa facundia veneratus sum, where the form is obviously influenced by that of *vorsa*; and there was a birth-goddess Prorsa, mentioned by Gellius, xvi, 16, 4 in a quotation from Varro.

The usual form of the adverb is *prorsus*; *prorsum* is found at all periods, but not in all writers.<sup>3</sup> There seems to be no

<sup>1</sup> It was the surprising inadequacy of this statement that led me to misread the notes which I had taken and say that Lejay attributed *prorsus* in the sense of 'in a word' to Curtius.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Lucretius always has the form in *-um*; *-us* and *-um* occur with about equal frequency in Plautus (7:8) and Terence (11:9). The following writers have only *prorsus*: Lucilius (2), Ennius (1), Varro, *Sat. Men.* (1), Cicero,

difference in meaning between *prorsus* and *prorsum*, and no satisfactory reason for the use of one form rather than the other has been discovered. It might be supposed that *prorsum* would be used by poets for metrical convenience, and that was doubtless sometimes the case; but they use it before consonants as well as before vowels. *Prorsus* occurs in Plaut. *Trin.* 730 (*codd.* C and D have *prorsus*), *Most.* 307, *Epid.* 581 (*cod.* A); Ter. *Hec.* 673 (*cod.* A); Cic. *Fam.* XIII, 13 (*codd.* H and D have *prorsus*); Fronto, p. 115 Naber. *Prosum* is read in Plaut. *Pers.* 477; Afran. 93 Ribb.; Lucr. III, 514; and *proversus* in Plaut. *Ps.* 955 on the authority of Varro, *L. L.* VII, 81 (*prorsus*, P; *prosusve*, A). *Prossus*, cited by Georges, *Handwörterbuch*<sup>7</sup>, from Plaut. *Asin.* 748, seems to have no manuscript authority; but see Leo on *Bacch.* 146.

I. *Prorsus* is derived from *pro vorsus* (cf. Fest. p. 268 L.) and its original meaning is therefore 'forward, straight ahead, onward,' as opposed to *rursus*, *transvorsus*, and the like. It is used (1) literally, of place: Plaut. *Ps.* 955, ut transversus, non proversus cedit, quasi cancer solet; *Cist.* 700; Enn. *Trag.* 104 Ribb.; Ter. *Hec.* 315; Lucil. 988 Marx,

quid sibi uult, quare fit ut intro vorsus et ad te  
spectent atque ferant vestigia se omnia prorsus?

Varro, *Sat. Men.* 28, mortales multi rursus ac prorsus meant; Cic. *Att.* XIV, 20, 4; Arnob. VII, 44.

*Prorsus* is also used in this sense (2) figuratively and of time: Ter. *Heaut.* 140, ita facio prorsus, 'that's what I've been doing from that moment';<sup>4</sup> Enn. 332, *Ad.* 520; Apul.

Orations (14), Sallust (8), Phaedrus (3), Curtius (4), Statius (1), Juvenal (1), Justinus (14), Quintilian (12), Seneca (5), Ausonius (1), Dictys (5), Scriptores Historiae Augustae (19). The same thing is true of Cicero's Philosophical Works (44), except for *prorsum* in *Leg.* III, 49, and of 23 examples from the Letters. Apuleius seems to have but 3 cases of *-um* out of 59 examples, and after his time *prorsum* is very rare, so far as the lexicons and indices may be trusted.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are from the volumes of the Loeb Classical Library.

*de Deo Socr.* 3 (p. 118, l. 4, Hild.), quos deos Plato existimat naturas incorporeales . . . prorsus et retro aeviternas; Arnob. II, 4, verum haec omnia inlustrius commemorabuntur . . . cum ulterius prorsus fuerimus evecti.

II. A second meaning of *prorsus* is closely allied to the first, namely, 'straight, straightway, directly.' (1) Literally, of place: Plaut. *Mil.* 1193, prorsum Athenas protinus abibo tecum; *Bacch.* 146, *Pers.* 677; Cato, ap. Fest. p. 268 L.; Ter. *Ad.* 550; Gell. XVI, 19, 17, tum Arionem prorsus ex eo loco Corinthum petivisse. Also (2) figuratively and of time: Ter. *Eun.* 254, hic homines prorsum ex stultis insanos facit, 'he turns fools straight into bedlamites'; Lucil. 918 Marx; Cic. *Fam.* IV, 10, 2, quod si nullum haberes sensum nisi oculorum, prorsus tibi ignoscerem.

III. By far the most common meaning of *prorsus* is 'exceedingly, absolutely, utterly, quite,' a development from the original signification similar to that of *praeclarus* and other compounds of *prae* with intensive force. This is the most frequent use of the word at all periods. It occurs in almost all the writers who use the word at all and with many of them it is the only meaning.<sup>5</sup>

In this sense *prorsus* may modify (1) a verb: Plaut. *Aul.* 397, sed cesso, priusquam prorsus perii, currere? Ter. *Eun.* 306, ita prorsum oblitus sum mei, 'I've utterly lost myself'; Cic. *Fin.* II, 27, rem ipsam prorsus probo.

*Prorsus* may modify (2) an adjective (*a*) in the positive degree: Plaut. *Most.* 307, ne . . . quisquam invidet prorsus commodis; Phaedr. II, 1, 11, exemplum egregium prorsus et laudabile; Boeth. *Consol.* I, 2, cum me non modo tacitum sed elinguem prorsus mutumque vidisset; rarely (*b*) in the comparative: Justinus, V, 7, 11, feliciores prorsus priores urbis ruinas ducentes . . . quae tectorum tantum ruina

<sup>5</sup> This use, including *prorsus ut* and *prorsus quasi*, is the predominant one in Plautus, Terence, Lucretius, Apuleius, the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, and perhaps in Sallust; it is the only one in Cicero's *Orations* and *Philosophical Works*, and the predominant one in his *Letters*, so far as my examples go.

taxatae sunt; or (c) in the superlative: Juv. 6, 249, dignissima<sup>6</sup> prorsus Florali matrona tuba; Apul. *Flor.* 16 (p. 64, l. 7, Hild.).

*Prorsus* may modify (3) an adverb: Ter. *Ad.* 761, ipsa si cupiat Salus, servare prorsus non potest hanc familiam, 'it's absolutely beyond the power of Providence itself to save this household'; Cic. *Fam.* vi, 20, 2, hoc mihi prorsus valde placet; Gell. xviii, 2, 1, Saturnalia Athenis agitabamus hilare prorsum ac modeste.

*Prorsus* sometimes appears to modify a noun: Cic. *Verr.* iv, 137, a Syracusanis prorsus nihil adiumenti exspectabam, *Tusc.* i, 9, prorsus nemo; or a pronoun: Lucr. iii, 45, nec prorsum quicquam nostrae rationis egere, 'and they have no need at all of our philosophy' (Munro). As a matter of fact, however, *prorsus* emphasizes the negative adverb implied in *nemo* and *nihil*,<sup>7</sup> and *quicquam* is virtually an adverb. It may be noted too that *nemo* is sometimes used as an adjective: Ter. *Eun.* 1082, accipit homo nemo melius prorsus neque prolixius, 'there isn't a creature living that entertains better or more splendidly.' Here *prorsus*, in spite of its position, modifies *nemo*.

This emphatic *prorsus* is very frequently used to strengthen an assertion, either positive or negative. From the lexical point of view there seems to be no good reason for making a separate category of negative sentences, as the lexicons commonly do,<sup>8</sup> any more than there is for making one of the ironical use in Curt. iv, 5, 13, grati prorsus coniugibus . . . revertimur. The irony has nothing to do with the use of *prorsus*, since a superlative *gratissimi* would have had the same force.

IV. By emphasizing the second of two related words *prorsus* acquires the meaning 'more than that, indeed, in

<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps accidental that *prorsus* is often used with *dignus* (Curt. iv, 4, 11, ix, 3, 9, x, 6, 13; Sen. *Phaed.* 853, *Herc. Oet.* 1482), but *dignissimus* is not very common.

<sup>7</sup> *Prorsus* is very common with these words, as well as with *nullus*.

<sup>8</sup> So also Hand, *Tursellinus*, iv, 619.

fact': Pliny, *N. H.* xxxiii, 9, manus et prorsus sinistrae maximam auctoritatem conciliavere auro, 'hands and a sinister hand at that' (Riley); Apul. *Met.* xi, 12, placido et prorsus humano gradu . . . sensim inrepo; Quint. *Inst.* xii, 10, 27, Latina facundia . . . similis Graecae ac prorsus discipula eius; Cic. *Fam.* iv, 10, 1, venies expectatus, neque solum nobis . . . sed prorsus omnibus; Apul. *Met.* v, 19, maritum incerti status et prorsus lucifugam tolero.<sup>9</sup>

V. The remaining uses of *prorsus* are influenced by its place in the sentence and by the context. In I-IV the position of *prorsus*, except in so far as it is affected by considerations of metrical convenience, is as a rule the usual one of an adverb modifying a verb, adjective, or other adverb. Its position with adjectives is shown by the examples under III, 2 and by Curt. ix, 3, 9, digna prorsus cogitatio animo tuo. *Prorsus* gradually shows a tendency to drift to other parts of the sentence, especially to its beginning. Through its position it may modify words or phrases other than those included under I-IV, or it may be somewhat loosely attached to the sentences as a whole. We have a somewhat similar phenomenon in the dative of the indirect object as compared with the dative of reference with its various subdivisions.

Thus through its position *prorsus* may modify (1) a noun (even when it does not contain or imply a negative adverb, as above): Quint. *Decl.* 252 (p. 6, l. 36, Bonnell), unde tantus et tam prorsus domi tuae tumultus; Apul. *de Deo Socr.* 16 (p. 149, l. 9, Hild.), hic quem dico prorsus custos, singularis praefectus; *Met.* iv, 15, fortissimum socium nostrum prorsus bestiam factum, 'our brave companion, now a perfect beast' (Butler). It may modify (2) a pronoun (even when the pronoun is not used adverbially, as above): Cic.

<sup>9</sup> In the last two examples one might suspect the meaning found in III, 2, but the first three are manifestly of a different kind. Somewhat similar are Lucr. vi, 528, omnia, prorsum omnia, and Apul. *Met.* x, 22, totum, sed prorsus totum. We have an inversion of the emphasis in Apul. *Met.* iii, 14, adiuro . . . nulli me prorsus ac ne tibi quidem ipsi adseveranti posse credere.

*Att.* iv, 12, prorsus id facies; Quint. *Inst.* ix, 4, 121, illud prorsus oratoris, scire ubi quoque genere compositionis sit utendum. It may be drawn (3) to a prepositional phrase or an equivalent: Plaut. *Pers.* 677, simulato quasi eas prorsum in navem; Aus. *de Hered.* 29 (p. 17 Peiper), haec mihi nec procul urbe sita est nec prorsus ad urbem; Cic. *Tusc.* i, 11, prorsus isto modo, 'precisely as you put it' (Nutting). It may modify (4) a conjunction, as in *prorsus ut*, on which see Wölfflin, *Arch. f. lat. Lex.* iv, 618 ff.<sup>10</sup> *Prorsus quasi* occurs several times in Justinus and is found also in Apul. *Met.* viii, 27, prorsus quasi deum praesentia solebant homines non sui fieri melius sed debiles officii vel aegroti; ix, 9, prorsus quasi possent tanti facinoris evadere supplicium. Quintilian has *cum prorsus* in *Inst.* vi, 3, 48, quia rare belle respondeant, nisi cum prorsus rebus ipsis adiuvantur. Finally *prorsus* (5) is used loosely with the entire sentence: Cic. *Tusc.* i, 65, prorsus haec divina mihi videtur vis; *Leg.* ii, 24, prorsus maiorem quidem rem nullam sciscam aliter, in minoribus, si voles, remittam hoc tibi. On *prorsus* in the former of these two examples Professor Nutting has one of the very few comments which editors make on this word, namely, "'Beyond a doubt.' This meaning is not far removed from the familiar signification 'outright.'" Under this head the use of *prorsus* by Sallust may be considered, since in many cases the meaning is determined by the position of the word and by the context. In his eight examples of the word Sallust puts *prorsus* first in every case except one, *Cat.* 16, 5, sed ea prorsus opportuna Catilinae, where we have the common usage of III, 2. In *Cat.* 15, 5, prorsus in facie voltuque vecordia inerat, there is no word to which *prorsus* may naturally be attached, but it seems to have the loose connection with the whole sentence which has just been mentioned. Here Kritz rendered *prorsus* by 'ut paucis

<sup>10</sup> We must distinguish cases in which *ut* is adverbial: e.g., Apul. *Met.* ix, 34, nuntians omne vinum . . . ferventi calore et prorsus ut igne copioso subdito rebullire; *Apol.* 94, (rescripsit mihi) prorsus ut 'vir bonus dicendi peritus.'

complectar,' a translation which in the form of 'in short, in a word' has been adopted rather generally. Kritz gives the same meaning to *prorsus* in *Cat.* 23, 2; 25, 5; *Jug.* 30, 3; 66, 1; 76, 4 (omitting *Jug.* 23, 1, which does not seem to differ from the other examples which he cites); Wölfflin, however (*op. cit.* 619), cites two of these sentences (*Jug.* 23, 1; 30, 3) to illustrate the intensive use of *prorsus* (III, 2). As a matter of fact, in each of these six sentences *prorsus* is followed, in four of them immediately, by an adjective (three times) and by *nihil*. In those cases it is difficult to believe that *prorsus* does not have intensive force, although it may also have a second meaning by the ἀπὸ κοινοῦ construction, since an enumeration of particulars precedes. This second meaning however is rather 'indeed, in fact' than 'in short.'<sup>11</sup> This seems to be the only possible meaning in *Cat.* 15, 5, unless we take *prorsus* with *vecordia* and translate the two words by 'utter madness.'

This use of *prorsus* in the sense of 'in fact' is rare. In *Lucr.* III, 514, aut aliquid prosum de summa detrahere hylum, Munro translates 'or withdraw in short some little from the whole.' It seems to be one of the usages in which Tacitus followed Sallust: e.g., *Hist.* II, 5, prorsus si avaritia abesset, antiquis ducibus par, 'indeed, save for avarice, he matched the generals of old days' (Murphy); III, 83, prorsus ut eandem civitatem et furere crederes et lascivire; *Ann.* VI, 4, metum prorsus et noxae conscientiam pro foedere haberi. Other examples are: *Apul. Apol.* 21, prorsus ad vivendum velut ad natandum is melior qui onere liberior; *Flor.* 9 (p. 40, l. 7, Hild.), prorsus omnis tuas virtutes ita effingit . . . ut . . . admirabilior esset in iuvene quam in te parta laus, 'in a word, he presents such a perfect pattern and likeness of your virtues that . . .' (Butler). Also in *Flor.* 9 (p. 38,

<sup>11</sup> The meaning 'in fact' is closely connected with that of 'more than that' (IV) in which *prae* has one of its regular meanings, 'forward'; this is not true of 'in short.' On the ἀπὸ κοινοῦ construction see *Studies in Philology*, xvii,



l. 3), we find *prorsus* non eo infitias nec radio nec subula . . . uti nosse, where it is difficult to separate *prorsus* from *non*, although it may also have the meaning 'as a matter of fact,' ἀπὸ κοινοῦ. We may add three examples from the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*: Alex. Sev. 41, 2, *prorsus* censuram suis temporibus de propriis moribus gessit; Gord. 13, 4, *prorsus* incurrere in parietes, vestem scindere, gladium arripere . . . *prorsus* furere videbatur; *Carac.* 9, 3, *prorsus* nihil inter fratres simile, where again it is difficult to separate *prorsus* from the following negative.

To summarize the above, *prorsus* is used much more extensively than one would infer from the books of reference. Its most frequent use is as an intensive adverb. The meaning 'in short' is doubtful; that of 'more than that, in fact' may be logically connected with the other meanings of the word and occurs in a few writers. The meaning of *prorsus* is affected by its position in the sentence and by the context. The statement that the poets avoid *prorsus* is true only if 'avoid' is taken in a very broad sense, or 'poets' in a very restricted one. It occurs quite frequently in Plautus, Terence, Lucretius, Phaedrus, and Seneca, and once or twice in Lucilius, Afranius, an unidentified comic writer (Inc. 59, Ribb.), Ennius, Varro, Horace, Statius, Juvenal, Ausonius, and Prudentius.

*Prorsus* belongs to the colloquial language, the *sermo cotidianus* rather than the *sermo plebeius*. It is not found in Caesar (nor in Nepos). Cicero uses it sparingly in his Orations and for the most part in his earlier speeches; he uses it very freely in the conversational part of his Philosophical Works, mainly in assertions (positive and negative).<sup>12</sup> The word does not occur in Petronius, but Apuleius has 59 instances in the *Metamorphoses*; in his other works it occurs, but much less frequently. Suetonius does not use the word, but the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* have 19 examples.

<sup>12</sup> He seems to use it rather freely in the Letters also. It occurs seven times in the first two books of the *Letters to Atticus*, ten times in Books III-XI.

*Prorsus* always adds something to the sentence in which it stands; yet it is frequently left untranslated. For example, Apul. *Met.* II, 6, nam et forma scitula et moribus ludica et prorsus argutula est, 'for she is quite pretty, has a sportive disposition and a charming wit' (Butler). The same translator renders *Met.* X, 15, deierantur utrique nullam se prorsus fraudem . . . factitasse, by 'each swearing that he had never cheated or robbed the other.' The old translation of Adlington, which however often overlooks the word, in this case does it justice by the translation, 'they swore both earnestly that neither of them stole or took away any jot of the meat.' *Prorsus*, too, deserves more attention from the commentators, especially those of more recent date. In this connection a few doubtful passages may be added: Plaut. *Epid.* 581, quid? ego lenocinium facio, qui . . . argentum egurgitem domo prorsus? 'absolutely ingurgitating money out of my house,' where the translator is probably right in connecting *prorsus* with the verb; Plaut. *Frag.* ap. Charis. I, 211, 33 K., ita sunt praedones, prorsus parcent nemini, where we seem to have a paratactic forerunner of the *prorsus ut* construction; Ter. *And.* 510, prorsus a me opinionem hanc tuam esse amotam volo, 'I should like to clear utterly away this opinion you've got of me'; an early example of *prorsus* at the beginning of the sentence, and widely separated from the word which it modifies (*amotam*); Lucr. III, 514, cited above, p. 36; Cic. *Fin.* IV, 54, his propositis tenuit prorsus consequentia, 'he adhered to the logical conclusion from these premises'; Cic. *Off.* III, 30, haec una res prorsus . . . aequae utrisque est propemodum comparanda, 'for in just this one point there is but little difference between the great and the ordinary man'; Stat. *Th.* III, 657, tua prorsus inani| verba polo causas abstrusaeque nomina rerum| eliciunt; Apul. *Met.* V, 8, ut illarum prorsus caelestium divitiarum copiis affluentibus satiatae . . . nutrent invidiam; IX, 18, adigit cuneum, qui rigentem prorsus servi tenacitatem violenter diffinderet; IX, 38, dextra quae tuum prorsus amputasset caput; *ib.*,

gulam sibi prorsus execut;<sup>13</sup> x, 3, nec te religio patris omnino deterreat, cui moriturum prorsus servabis uxorem, 'for thou shalt be the savior of his wife, who else must die' (Butler). This translation throws no light on the meaning of *prorsus*; cf. p. 38, above.

<sup>13</sup> In these examples I am inclined to see the meaning 'straightway'; Hildebrand takes *prorsus* in the second with *execuit* (III, 3).